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ABSTRACT

According to a 1981 survey, advertising practitioners place more importance on the accreditation of college advertising programs when it comes to evaluating a graduate of such a program than do the educators who must earn the accreditation. Only directors of advertising education programs in the communication-journalism area that are currently accredited match the opinion of the practitioners on the importance of accreditation. Educators, however, have a much higher opinion of the preparation of their students than do practitioners. On the average, educators rated graduates of bachelor programs above the median in terms of preparation for both creative and management entry-level positions. Practitioners, on the other hand, rated students below the median on preparation for both areas of advertising work. To make accreditation meaningful, it is likely that advertising educators must come to a greater sense of agreement on accreditation standards, and practitioners, through their organizations, must help in the effort. (Author/HOD)

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ADVERTISING DIVISION

PRACTITIONER PERCEPTIONS OF ADVERTISING EDUCATION ACCREDITATION

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PRACTITIONER PERCEPTIONS
OF ADVERTISING EDUCATION ACCREDITATION

Data compiled by Billy I. Ross, chairman of the Department of Mass Communications at Texas Tech University, Lubbock, and Donald G. Hileman, dean of the College of Communications of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, showed 95 advertising education programs in four-year colleges and universities in the United States in the academic year ending August 1980. There were 80 programs reported in the journalism and communication area and 15 in business studies. (1)

Advertising education programs can be directly accredited by only one organization: the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. ACEJMC accredits only in the journalism-communication area and, as of January 1982, had sanctioned 30 advertising programs. (2)

The American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business accredits business schools, colleges and other units as a whole and does not offer accreditation to any specific program within the larger body. In AACSB's Policies, Procedures and Standards, advertising studies, as such, are covered by the blanket statement: "Business administration programs for particular industries, such as hotel-restaurant management, if offered within the business unit, must meet all standards." Of the 15 advertising programs in business units, 12 were in schools or colleges accredited by AACSB. (3)

In 1980, 90 directors of advertising programs listed in the Ross guide for the year 1979 were asked for their opinions on the importance of accreditation "when it comes to evaluating a graduate of (your) bachelor degree program." They were asked to respond on a 0 (not important) to 10 (very important) scale. There were 51 responses (56%), tabulated as follows: (4)

Business educators	7 (14%) - Importance 3.4
Communication educators	44 (86%) - Importance 4.4
ACEJMC accredited	18 (41%) - Importance 6.1 (a)
Not accredited	26 (59%) - Importance 3.2 (a)

(a) Difference is significant at .10 level.

In 1981, a similar questionnaire went to four groups of advertising practitioners:

Advertising managers of businesses doing national or regional advertising drawn at random from the Standard Directory of Advertisers, April 1980. N = 501.

A special sample of managers of advertiser affiliated with the Association of National Advertisers. In supplying this list, ANA advised that "the companies selected are those with large advertising departments and are more apt to hire advertising majors. For the most part they are industrial companies and are not representative of the ANA membership as a whole." There were no duplications of the first random ad manager list. N = 100.

Advertising agency account supervisors drawn at random from the Standard Directory of Advertising Agencies, October 1979. The makeup of the directory resulted in a geographic representation of agencies nationwide. N = 501.

Advertising agency creative directors drawn at random from the directory above. Agencies were not duplicated. Geographic representation was realized. N = 511.

These individuals were asked, among other questions, if they understood the process of and reason for earning formal accreditation of an academic advertising program in a college or a university. The questionnaire suggested one of four responses to the question: 1) Understand accreditation. 2) Understand fairly well. 3) Understand vaguely. 4) Do not understand or no answer.

If the answer was 1, 2, or 3 above, subjects were asked to offer their opinions of accreditation on the same 0 to 10 scale previously used with educators. The question to practitioners was: "How important do you believe accreditation is when it comes to evaluating a graduate of a bachelor level advertising program?" Response, related to understanding and importance, was:

Advertising managers not affiliated with ANA -
50 questionnaires returned - 10% response:

Understand accreditation	8 (16%)	- Importance 5.5
Understand fairly well	15 (30%)	- Importance 5.0
Understand vaguely	13 (26%)	- Importance 5.7
No or no answer	14 (28%)	

ANA advertising managers -
76 questionnaires returned - 76% response:

Understand accreditation	10 (13%)	- Importance 4.2
Understand fairly well	18 (24%)	- Importance 6.4
Understand vaguely	30 (39%)	- Importance 5.4
No or no answer	18 (24%)	

Advertising agency account supervisors -
92 questionnaires returned - 18% response:

Understand accreditation	19 (21%)	- Importance 6.7
Understand fairly well	21 (23%)	- Importance 6.0
Understand vaguely	34 (37%)	- Importance 4.7
No or no answer	18 (20%)	

Advertising agency creative directors -
68 questionnaires returned - 13% response:

Understand accreditation	19 (28%)	- Importance 6.3
Understand fairly well	17 (25%)	- Importance 5.6
Understand vaguely	13 (19%)	- Importance 3.9
No or no answer	19 (28%)	

The limitation of the survey are many. To state a few:

The response to the question of understanding the accreditation process was not behavioral and was not validated. A respondent who said that he understood the system was not tested on his response in any way. However, when analysis of variance was made among the 12 groups who said they understood the accreditation scheme in some way, there was no statistical difference in their responses regarding importance.

The 76 percent response from ANA managers results in a confidence level in excess of 95 percent. Response rates of 10, 18, and 13 percent do not provide the desired level of confidence. (5)

The sample in each group was based on individuals who are involved

primarily in the practice of national or regional advertising. There was no involvement of those who practice local and retail advertising -- with some agency exceptions -- or of those who work on the media side of advertising. National advertisers and agencies unquestionably hire far fewer bachelor graduates of advertising programs than do their local advertising counterparts.

The questionnaire went out from and response was requested to a department of marketing in a college of business administration. From written comment on some questionnaires, the business nomenclature in the letterhead of the questionnaire could have caused bias in response.

However, if the results are accepted as exploratory, national advertising practitioners place more importance on accreditation as a way to evaluate a graduate of a program than do the educators who are responsible for setting the curriculum and the standards and earning the accreditation stamp.

In each case, those practitioners who admitted to any understanding of accreditation at all rated its importance higher than business educators. Only accredited journalism-communication educators, with their 6.1 rating for accreditation importance, compared favorably with the practitioners' opinions.

One of the points made by the author of this paper in a report delivered to the American Academy of Advertising in 1981 seems still to be pertinent:

> There are three major national associations that operate exclusively in the advertising area: The American Advertising Federation, the Association of National Advertisers, and the American Association of Advertising Agencies. The National Retail Merchants Association also takes an interest in local (especially retail) advertising. And there are numerous media and trade association on both national and regional levels that are vocal and concerned over the plight of the advertising business in the nation.

Not one of these groups involves itself with the accrediting process of either AACSB or ACEJMC. Not one of them attempts to discuss advertising curriculum standards or faculty experience requirements or facilities need in advertising education in any formal way.

It was noted that the AAF, with its administration of the college chapter program, the National Student Advertising Competition, the Alpha Delta Sigma national honorary society, the annual job clearinghouse booklet, and the inclusion of an advertising educator on its national board of directors is a decided supporter of advertising education in general. But AAF steers distincly clear of curriculum matters or educational standards.

It was also observed that the International Newspaper Advertising and Marketing Executives group is an industry member of ACEJMC. (6)

It it also important to know that individual advertising managers and other advertising practitioners do, from time to time, become involved as members of accreditation teams. (When ACEJMC is accrediting an advertising sequence, at least one member of the team must be an advertising practitioner or teacher.)

And, for the first time in recent memory, an advertising educator, in 1981, was appointed to the ACEJMC Accrediting Committee. This is, however, scant representation in the lists of dozens upon dozens of members of committees and other accredition functions within AACSB and ACEJMC.

In a question collateral to accreditation, educators, in the 1980 study, were asked how well prepared the graduates of their bachelor programs were to go into 1) management, and 2) creative work in advertising without further academic preparation. On the 0 to 10 scale: (7)

Business educators	Management 6.3 - Creative 4.6
Communication educators	Management 5.3 - Creative 7.2
ACEJMC accredited	Management 6.3 - Creative 7.7
Large programs *	Management 7.5 - Creative 8.9

* Those graduating 70 or more students in 1978-1979.

It would appear, if this survey is to be believed, that advertising educators think they are doing a reasonably good to very good job of educating students for both management and creative entry level positions. National advertising practitioners do not share the opinion. The 1981 survey of management and agency individuals resulted in the following:

Advertising managers not affiliated with ANA -
43 responses: "How well prepared are the graduates of bachelor degree advertising programs to go to work in the management field of advertising without further academic training?"

Management 3.3

ANA advertising managers -
72 responses: Same question.

Management 3.5

Advertising agency account supervisors -
88 responses: "How well prepared are the graduates of bachelor degree programs to go to work in the account management field in agencies without further academic training?"

Management 3.3

Advertising agency creative directors -
58 responses: "How well prepared are the graduates of bachelor degree programs to go to work in the creative field in agencies without further academic training?"

Creative 3.3

These data are based completely on perception, of course, and not necessarily on any reality. However, it would seem that one avenue to upgrading the poor opinion that national advertising practitioners hold of advertising education would be in the accreditation process. It is something they say they believe is moderately important.

But to make accreditation meaningful, it is likely that advertising educators must come to a greater sense of agreement on accreditation standards. And practitioners, through their organizations, must join the team.

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